

SOCIALIST STUDIES

No. 44 Summer 2002

- **THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM**
- **NATIONALISM AND WAR**
- **THE SOCIALIST CHALLENGE TO TONY BENN**
- **LETTERS FROM CYBER-SPACE**
- **THE US, IRAQ AND OIL**
- **EXPLOITATION AND TAXATION**
- **FROM OUR COMRADE IN FRANCE**
- **OBITUARY FOR GEORGE RUSSELL**

**OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
THE SOCIALIST PARTY
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

Communications to: General Secretary,
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

**SOCIALISM NEEDS YOU!
AND YOU NEED SOCIALISM!**

The Problem

Without Socialists there can be no Socialist political organisation and no Socialism. The Socialist Party of Great Britain needs members in order to carry out Party work. We need writers, speakers and distributors of our journal, Socialist Studies, and other Party literature. We need committed Socialists who reject capitalism and accept the urgent need for a new society based upon production for direct social use, not for profit. And we need members who accept and will be prepared to defend the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles.

The Solution

The solution is simple. If you agree with our analysis of capitalism, the Socialist objective and the political means required to establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society, then you are already a Socialist. But individual Socialists cannot alone make a marked impact upon Capitalism. The struggle for Socialism has to be an organised one and this requires collective action by the working class.

This is why a Socialist political party is vitally important. It focuses attention on the class struggle and enables workers to act with unity and strength. If you are a Socialist then the first step is to join the Socialist Party of Great Britain. We are not a sect or a cult. There are no intellectuals in the Party, only intelligent men and women who share the same class interests, Socialist ideas and Socialist objective. However, we only want members who agree with the Socialist case and if you do agree with us then we want you as a member.

What Next?

If you agree with the Socialist case then the next step is to apply for membership. We have no leaders. No one will tell you what to do and to think. All we expect is political commitment and enthusiasm to work with other Socialists to achieve the establishment of Socialism. Joining the Socialist Party of Great Britain will be the single most important political decision you will make. One more Socialist is one less worker voting for capitalist parties like Labour, Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. A Socialist party with a growing membership will make an increasing impact on the political class struggle. If you want a world with no unemployment, exploitation, war, poverty, discomfort and inequality you should seriously consider joining us. **ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO**
The Socialist Party of Great Britain, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London
N12 8SB.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

Socialism. A scary word? A misunderstood word? An abused word? A word that conjures up to the misinformed mind images of people jumping over the debris of the Berlin wall to an illusionary consumer paradise on the other side. Or a word association with the lies which seep out from between the pages of the media portraying Socialism as a bleak landscape filled with strikers, piled rubbish and unburied bodies.

We are often asked whether it's worth all this? What are we struggling for? You might as well question why we breathe. If we stop breathing, we'll die. If we stop struggling for Socialism it would be a denial of what we could become, what we could achieve and how we might live as free men and women.

Is the struggle for Socialism too much effort? Do we turn our back on the world with its wars, unemployment and grinding poverty? Do we let the rich inherit the earth? Is the answer to what appears to be seemingly insurmountable political odds, surrender, capitulation and desertion from the political field? Are we to say that workers have no choice but to accept their class exploitation, their class slavery and their class servitude? Are two-thirds of the working class really contented as the economist, John Galbraith, claims?

Looking at the world today with its poverty, wars and unemployment, could you give up? Could you abandon Socialist politics once you understood that capitalism is the cause of the workers' social problems? If capitalism can never be made to work in the interests of all society how could you remain outside Socialist politics?

We do not think you can. It is like someone trying to convince themselves of something they know is not true. In capitalism there can be no capitulation, only struggle. The class struggle is just that - a struggle. The capitalist class

were never just going to roll over. They are like Bram Stoker's vampire, constantly needing the surplus value taken from the working class to keep them alive. Without surplus labour they could not exist.

Socialism, therefore, is not about the gulags of state capitalism. Socialism is not about walls. And it is not about the failed capitalist politics of the Labour Party.

Socialism is simply a social system in which production and distribution takes place to meet human needs. Socialism is the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all society. There will be no class struggle, no classes and no class privilege. There will be no bureaucrats telling people what to think and what to consume. Co-operation will take the place of competition. There will be no employers. There will be no labour market. And there will be no wages system. It will be free men and women to decide what to produce and for whom. All can take part in the social affairs of society.

The journalist, Christopher Hitchens, believes it no longer makes sense for some people to call themselves socialists. He wrote "... saying that you are a socialist is no longer intelligible or challenging" (*Independent*, 6 March 2002). We disagree. If, to be a Socialist, means someone who understands capitalism is a historical social system with a beginning and an end in class struggle, someone who is aware today's conflicts and social problems are generated by capitalist class relations and private property ownership, and someone who is prepared to take political action to replace production for profit with production for use, then being a Socialist is intelligible and challenging.

Politics cannot be ignored. Socialist politics is too important to be ignored. If we, the working class, do not change society then capitalism will merely go from one crisis to the next, from one war to the next, and from one barbaric obscenity to the next.

Capitalism is going nowhere. But the working class can go somewhere. They can politically move towards Socialism.

To establish Socialism requires conscious and political action by a majority of workers convinced that production for profit has to be replaced by production for use.

There cannot be Socialism without Socialists. Socialists are made by persuasion. Workers have to be convinced by the soundness and validity of our case. Yes, it is hard and repetitive work. Welcome to the struggle. We know we will win.

The Anarchy of Capitalism

Business thrives in the ruins. Cities become piles of ruins; villages become cemeteries; countries, deserts; populations are beggared; churches, horse stalls. International law, treaties and alliances, the most sacred words and the highest authority have been torn to shreds. Every sovereign "by the grace of god" is called a rogue and lying scoundrel by his cousin on the other side. Every diplomat is a cunning rascal to his colleagues in the other party. Every government sees every other as dooming its own people and worthy only of universal contempt ... Violated, dishonoured, wading in blood, dripping filth - there stands bourgeois society. This is it [in reality]. Not all spic and span and moral, with pretence to culture, philosophy, ethics, order, peace, and the rule of law - but the ravening beast, the witches' Sabbath of anarchy, a plague to culture and humanity. Thus it reveals itself in its true, its naked form. Rosa Luxemburg

NATIONALISM AND WAR

In March 2002, a month that saw Israeli tanks and soldiers enter Palestine and suicide bombers kill men, women and children in Israel, the Socialist Party of Great Britain was sent an invitation by Palestinian supporters in this country to attend a rally in London. We declined. And this was our reason.

Socialists are opposed to war and to all that war represents. It is sometimes suggested that for national liberation wars this anti-war attitude should be abandoned. This argument derives from the theory formulated by Lenin that the workers of the countries with colonial dependencies and the colonial peoples have a common enemy in imperialism and should therefore co-operate against it. The loss of their colonies would weaken the imperialist ruling class and so make it easier for the working class to overthrow them.

This leads to groups like the Socialist Workers Party and the Revolutionary Communist Group to support the Palestinians against Israel. Not because of any interest in the Palestinian cause but because Israel is supported by the imperialist US. They accept an infantile political view of the capitalist world where the enemies of the US are their friends and the friends of the US are their enemy. The SPGB does not accept this view.

Before examining objections to this doctrine it is necessary to recognise what imperialism is. The assumption that some powers are by nature imperialist and others are not disregards the reality of capitalism. All capitalist states are expansionist, seeking to extend the industrial, trading and financial interests of the ruling class. What distinguishes one from another is the amount of military force at their disposal. Israel and surrounding Arab states each seeking to encroach on the territories of the other are no less imperialist than the great colonial powers of the past and present.

It follows from this that the ending of a particular colonial empire, while leaving world capitalism intact, may change the direction but in no way reduces the sum total of actual and potential imperialism.

Events have proved how wrong Lenin was. The granting of political independence to colonial territories, whether under peaceful or violent pressure, has not weakened capitalism generally. It has merely altered the balance of power between the various States; likewise, the collapse of the Russian Empire at the end of the 1980's has helped the US to become the dominant world power, the only "superpower" - for the time being.

Many of the national liberation movements have been mere pawns in the hands of rival imperialists. Where they have won, independence has benefited neither the colonial peoples nor the workers of the former colony-holding countries. For it is not the workers who are liberated but only a minority who impose their rule and take over from the foreign governments the role of exploiters. This would be the case if a fully Palestinian State is established. Once in power the ruling class will trade with Israel and the US, break strikes, attack trade unionists and oppose attempts by the Palestinian working class to form a Socialist Party. There might even be civil war as one Palestinian faction fights another to become the dominant ruling class.

Nationalist movements under capitalism are both a menace and an illusion. They are a menace because they can be used to provoke antagonism towards other groups and thus provide fertile ground for capitalist interests to work up support for war. Nationalism itself is not the cause of war but it is exploited to give cover to the naked rivalries of capitalism. Workers should not underestimate the importance of the whole Middle East for western capitalism, with its dependence on Arab oil supplies and its constant need for compliant rulers in these states. Workers have no interest in protecting trade routes, fighting over raw resources or defending strategic points of influence.

Nationalism is an illusion. Governments, in defending capitalist interests, are all opposed to the development of internationalism among the working class of the world.

Nationalism is not the cause of war. There are in fact no purely nationalist movements. Invariably the nationalist sentiment is mixed with economic factors and made use of by the class that has an interest to serve by achieving independence, while independence means not the emancipation of the exploited section of the population but a mere change of rulers.

We see then that national liberation wars and nationalism are movements which Socialists must oppose. National liberation wars are essentially the struggle of a would-be ruling class against colonial rulers; once in power this new ruling class continues the exploitation of the workers.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain rejects the argument that capitalist national movements like The Palestinian *Intifada* should be supported by the Socialists. Capitalism now dominates the world and it has raised the productive capacity of society to a level which makes capitalism's replacement by world Socialism a practical possibility now. Workers everywhere need to work for the immediate establishment of a Socialist system of society.

THE REALITY OF CAPITALISM

"Capitalism without bankruptcy is like Christianity without Hell".
Frank Borman, former President of Eastern Airlines (a company now bankrupt and defunct).

THE SOCIALIST CHALLENGE TO TONY BENN AND THE CAPITALIST LEFT

We cannot prevent those on the capitalist left from calling themselves socialists. We can and do demand scrutiny of their claims.

If you are politically intelligent enough to wonder what makes the SPGB tick, what it is that makes this Party unique among parties claiming to be Socialist, a little investigation and a few facts will be rewarding.

Firstly, you will find (and here we assume complete political honesty) there is nothing unique about the Communist Party, the Socialist Labour Party, the Socialist Party (Militant), International Socialists, the Socialist Alliance, the Socialist Workers Party of the so-called Left in the Labour Party whether it be **Tribune**, **Left Briefing**, Tony Benn or other Left factions within this anti-working class capitalist Party.

All these disreputable anti-working class parties share a huge area of common ground in being concerned in the day-to-day, every changing panorama of issues thrown up by capitalism, and in proposing piecemeal schemes or policies for "*dealing*" with them. This is what is meant by reformism. They are all "*something now*" opportunists, which is why they are able to form convenient alliances. They all see the Labour Party in various ways as an instrument they would like to use for their own ends, although, under Blair, the Labour Party has created a moat over which they cannot currently cross.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain totally rejects their whole approach to politics and everything they stand for as having nothing to do with Socialism and completely unworthy of working class support.

If you have enough integrity to understand the hostility clause in our **Declaration of Principles** and why we find it necessary "*to wage war against*

all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist'
read on.

Our hostility is to the political parties whose ideas and policies are directed at trying to solve social problems within capitalism and which are, therefore, anti-working class. The capitalist left do not focus on the question of exploitation and the urgent need to abolish the wages system. Capitalism cannot be humanised, "*improved*", or made to work in an uncapitalist manner. The activities of such parties are therefore a dangerous waste of time and a misdirection of working class attention. They are also a betrayal of working class interests.

The war we determinedly wage against other parties is the class war. We oppose all parties whose actions retain capitalism, its wars, its poverty, its unemployment, its exploitation, its crises and its failure to meet the needs of all society. We also oppose all parties which hinder Socialists' efforts to raise workers' "*consciousness*", to help them to deal with causes not effects, to organise politically to get rid of capitalism.

If you are serious about the rights and wrongs of these issues, here is a challenge you may at first think strange. The next time you have an opportunity to go to a leftist meeting, say one advertised by Tony Benn and his supporters, go along.

Such a meeting was recently held at Friends Meeting House in London and addressed by Mr Benn on February 13 this year. What follows is the sort of thing you will hear from the platform being roundly applauded by the leader-loving believers in making capitalism better. You will not hear any left-wing Labour reforms attacked by other Left-wing groups; they merely put forward further reformist ideas of their own.

In his opening speech, Mr Benn mentioned that the wealth ownership gap in the UK is wider now than a hundred years ago. Not a lot to shout about after several periods of Labour government including massive majorities in 1945, 1997 and 2001. It makes the futility of reformism obvious.

Mr Benn enthused about the election of the post-war Labour government and its programme of nationalisation supported by the TUC. He never once mentioned the broken strikes, the wage-freezes, nuclear weapons, Atlee's support for Truman's atom-bombing of Japan, the Korean War, or post-war conscription.

He advocated "*industrial democracy and workers' control*", failing to explain that the real issue is the ownership of the means of production by the capitalist class and the consequent exploitation of a non-owning majority of wage-workers, employees. Today, workers run and control all the actual processes of production in the factories, mines, railways and offices but they do so for the profits of the class that owns the means of production as private property to the exclusion of everyone else. Industrial democracy under these conditions is the democracy of the lamb in the lair of the lion.

Similarly, nationalisation, still a pet policy of the Left, is neither more, nor less successful, than private enterprise. We should recall that it was the Tories who first intended to use nationalisation in the 1840's against the railway owners. There is nothing "*Socialist*" about nationalisation. The State is the executive committee of the capitalist class as a whole (see Marx and Engels' **The Communist Manifesto**). The inglorious demise of State capitalism in the former Soviet Union, with near 100% nationalisation in most sectors of the economy and a colossal Party/State bureaucracy, not only shows the uselessness of nationalisation, it shows the SPGB was right in urging workers to have nothing to do with it.

In drawing attention to Thatcher's anti-union legislation, Benn had to admit

that it had not been repealed by the Labour Government, but did not mention Labour's failed attempt to do the same thing with the "*In Place of Strife*" proposals under the 1969 Wilson Government.

There was a discussion period and contributions were invited from the audience. Some petty official spoke for the so-called Communist Party, and with much enthusiasm extolled the virtues of proportional representation, referring to the wonders it had achieved for the Scottish Assembly. As a remnant of Stalinism, he conveniently failed to mention what would happen if the CP were to get elected by proportional representation. Their history shows that within weeks there would be no other parties to be proportionally represented.

Since what is needed in order to end capitalism and establish Socialism is a democratic majority of workers understanding and wanting this fundamental revolutionary change, proportional representation is at best irrelevant. The Communist Party has, throughout its existence, in this and other countries, contributed nothing to the development of Socialist understanding; their efforts have always been in the opposite direction.

Somebody else recalled what Hitler had done to the Reichstag - nobody mentioned what Lenin did to the Constituent assembly many years before.

One contributor favoured republicanism-capitalism without the monarchy. In his closing remarks, Mr Benn said "*all the functions of the monarchy should be transferred to Parliament*" (applause). What functions? With his leader, Mr Blair referred to as President Blair, do we face a leftist future with Blair (or successors him), riding in a splendid horse-drawn carriage to the State opening of Parliament, or riding side-saddle for the Trooping of the Colour?

The so-called Socialist Workers Party, who stayed outside, were busy peddling the idea that capitalism could be made more peaceful if only it would stop behaving like capitalism - as always with the SWP, treating effects and ignoring the cause.

The SWP are among the capitalist Left who, in a vague way, object to profits, recently promoting the slogan "*People before Profits*". This of course does not do away with profits but seeks to ensure that they come after people. It is absurd to advocate abstracting any essential factor of capitalism without seeking its total abolition.

A short contribution by one of our members reminded the meeting that it was the post-war Labour government, about which Mr Benn had been so delighted, that started the production of nuclear weapons in this country. He pointed to people still being arrested half a century late under the present Labour government for protesting against Trident submarines in Scotland. Proportional representation seems to have had no effect on that! He made the further point that classless society - Socialism - means the abolition of the wages system. There can be no meeting point between the capitalist Left wanting to retain wage-slavery and Socialists striving to end it.

Chairman Rodney Bickerstaff even laughed off nuclear weapons with a story that he had approached Gordon Brown with the suggestion that instead of passing the collection tin for health and social services, he should really fund these and pass the tin to finance nuclear weapons. He failed to realise the real perspective in which he had put the post-war achievements of Labour governments.

There were a few jokes, a lot of laughter and massive areas of blatant evasion, all of which was warmly received by a fawning audience.

Among his concluding remarks, Mr Benn said he had "*seen the Labour party swing from Left to Right and back so many times I've lost count*". He confidently predicted that the unions are about to push it to the left again. What would stop it later swinging to the right again, he didn't say, nor what fundamental difference there is between these two points.

He still affirmed his loyalty to the Labour Party and urged workers to support it. He may have in his mind some idealised version of what he thinks the Labour Party could be. We do not want that either. The Party he is in is the Party of wars; Afghanistan, Serbia, Iraq, Korea, World Wars One and Two. It is the Party of big business.

The illusions of the capitalist Left are no substitute for a clear understanding of Socialism and the readiness to organise workers consciously and politically to achieve it. These are reflected in the soundness and contemporary relevance of the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles.

POLITICS AS THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

"The extreme limit of the possible can only be obtained by grasping for the impossible. The realized possibility is the resultant of the impossibilities which have been striven for. Willing what is objectively impossible does not, therefore signify senseless fantasy-spinning and self-delusion, but practical politics in the deepest sense. To demonstrate the impossibility of realising a political goal is not to show its senselessness. All it shows, at most, is the critics lack of insight into society's laws of motion, particularly the laws that govern the formation of the social will. What is the true and strongest policy? It is the art of the impossible." Karl Liebknecht

LETTERS FROM CYBER-SPACE

1. Socialism's Lack of progress

I understand that your aim is a classless society. How does this differ from the Labour Party? Why has Socialism made such slow progress over the last hundred years? Do you think you will ever be successful? I am interested in Socialism but find few workers who are interested. They seem to support capitalism. Angela Copeland.

Our reply: The Labour Party has a misleading habit of calling itself and its policies Socialist when in fact it wants nothing to do with Socialism. There is no word in politics so open to misunderstanding as Socialism! So to describe Socialism simply as a "classless" society is to leave yourself open to misrepresentation.

In the SPGB's **Object**, we explain clearly what we mean by Socialism and what it is we work for as a party.

Among other things, Socialism will mean a new social system, world-wide, without national barriers; an end to buying and selling; an end to commodity production and production for profit; an end to the wages system; and consequently an end to the system of class exploitation.

Since the world's resources - the land and all that's on it, the oil wells and the mines, factories and farms, in short, all the means of producing and distributing wealth - will be held in common and controlled democratically by all the community, world socialism will put an end to the class struggle between the interests of capital and labour, employers and employees, those who buy and sell labour power.

As for the Labour Party there is no indication at all that this is what they stand for. On the contrary, they are proud to declare themselves "*the party of business*". Nigel Griffiths, the minister for small businesses, recently said "*I want to make entrepreneurs (capitalists) as recognised and admired as footballers and film stars. My job is to make sure they have access to the very best advice and support on offer to help their business succeed*" (**Independent**, 25 February 2002. For more on the Labour Party, we urge you to read our pamphlet "**New Labour: A Party of Capitalism**").

The Socialist Party has had some setbacks in the last 100 years and there are several reasons for our slow progress. Perhaps the main reason is that workers have been side-tracked by parties offering reforms to deal with the numerous problems constantly thrown up by capitalism. Another reason was the mistaken belief that the Soviet regime in Russia was Socialist, to be either admired as a role model or rejected as an indication that Marxism/Socialism meant dictatorship. Another reason is the workers' lack of awareness of the case for Socialism and their lack of class-consciousness.

The SPGB is still a small party, partly because we do not waste our efforts advocating "*sticking plaster*" solutions, reforms to deal with the problems caused by the capitalist system without tackling the root cause of these problems. Also we argue that the Party standing for Socialism, and the ending of the wages system, must be independent of and opposed to all other parties. If that makes our work slower, we will at least build on a firm foundation: a membership solidly united in their clear understanding of **why** Socialism is needed; **how** it can be brought about; and in our **class-consciousness**, our opposition to capitalism as a system, not just to some of the problems it causes.

You ask what you can do. The answer is that if, like us, you know that capitalism is the cause of poverty, unemployment and war, and many other problems, and above all that it works against the interests of the working class - ie more than 90% of the population; if like us you understand that Socialism

can only be brought about by democratic political organisation and action; we hope you will join with us in working to make the case for Socialism better known and the movement for Socialism stronger.

The SPGB'S message is simple. You have a choice. If you agree with our platform, our **Object** and **Declaration of Principles**, get in touch. If you disagree and want to tell us why you think we are wrong, let us know. In short, join us or oppose us. There is no "Third Way".

Editorial Committee

2. Religion

Why is the SPGB opposed to religion? Surely there are many people who would like to join your Party but are debarred through holding religious views. Why can't someone be religious and be a Socialist? John Phillips, student

Our reply: The SPGB has one very basic, simple but important requirement of all its members. That is, that they declare that they understand and agree with the Party's **Object** and **Declaration of Principles**. This also means that they understand and support the Party's position and policy on a number of issues which, though not mentioned in these Principles, become issues of importance since they arise out of these Principles and are inseparably linked with them.

One such issue is war: the Party's opposition to capitalism's wars arises from our clear understanding of the position of the working class under the capitalist system. Likewise the SPGB's founding Principles, which explain why Socialism is necessary and how it can be achieved, are - in all key points - derived from Marxian thinking. It is a central part of our case that in the past it was class struggles, arising out of class interests, which were the driving force in history. The class struggle in capitalist society arises out of the social, political and economic relations of the capitalist system.

We argue that Socialism can only be brought about by the working class taking class-conscious, democratic, political action to end the wages system and production for profit. We assert that the workers' emancipation *"must be the work of the working class itself"*. We have no expectation that praying to a deity would be any use to us.

Among the ideological props of capitalism are nationalism and religion. We oppose both. Like nationalism, religion is used to mystify and divide the working class. Religions cannot unify the working class: this can only be done by their becoming aware of their common class interests, and of the reality of the class struggle between Capital and Labour.

As a Party we need to be united, to have a membership with a clear understanding of why Socialism is needed and how it can be achieved. It would be impossible for people with religious beliefs to support a Party whose whole policy is rooted in the materialist conception of history. Such individuals would find themselves with a conflict of loyalties and considerable confusion in their minds.

How could they accept our view that there are no immortal truths, and that religions themselves are actually a reflection of specific historic conditions? And could they begin to accept our view that it is high time the working class got up off their knees, and stopped praying for better times and thanking their god(s) for a world of poverty, unemployment, wars and pollution?

Surely it is high time for the working class - all those who live by selling their physical and mental abilities to make others rich - to unite, recognising that the class system exploits them, and that this can only be ended by their own class-conscious organisation and democratic political action.

Editorial Committee

3. Terrorism

I read your Socialist Studies regarding terrorism. Surely the USA is defending those who were killed and weren't they workers too? It seems that the weight of criticism is against the USA and not the Taliban and Bin Laden. There is very little criticism on the Left against terrorists in Palestine who attack innocent men and women or indeed Russia against the Chechnyans. The problem with modern conflicts is that they are all encompassing and not clear cut. I could be killed by a bomb planted by the IRA and have no support for the Loyalists. The world is becoming very small and those affected by conflict are becoming more and more innocent. Surely this is the problem?
Fiona Smith, USA

Our reply: America can hardly expect to see itself as the world's only super-power and self-appointed world policeman, complete with cluster-bombs and virtually limitless other powers of mass destruction without being held responsible for much of what happens in the world.

If you put aside your partisan attitude, you will see that the SPGB condemns British capitalism and the mealy-mouthed Euro-capitalist humbugs in equal measure.

We do not favour smaller or would-be military capitalists such as the IRA, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban or the PLO. In the last case, it is Israel that has, with US support, been in armed occupation of neighbouring territories for nearly 40 years. Why do you not regard Israeli militarism as terrorist?

You are of course aware that America armed and financed the Taliban when they were fighting the Russians and when the US oil companies thought they could deal with them.

We are not on the "Left"; we reject capitalism whoever runs it.

It is your beloved America that has become very quiet about Chechnya. There has been no word of criticism from Bush on that issue, though he and Putin may yet fall out over Central Asia oil and gas. Our statement condemns Russia's conduct in Chechnya as well as Chechen nationalism.

The problem is not, as you suggest, that the world is "*becoming very small*". It is that the world is a capitalist world. War and terrorism, as well as the other major social problems, existed before the world started to become "*small*".

Terrorism with innocent victims is hardly new; it was going on in the 19th century, and periodically in the 20th century. Americans have had experience of terrorism fairly recently, eg the first attack on the World Trade Centre, and the Oklahoma City attack, not to mention quite a few presidents being assassinated. You seem to think Americans should be, or normally, exempt from being "*innocent*" victims.

But capitalism is a world of insecurity, for all, without exception. Terrorism, like war, results from conflicts over land, resources and business interests, especially oil.

Our object, Socialism, means a world without nationalism and frontiers, where the industry and resources will be held in common by mankind, and used in a sane and democratic manner to satisfy human needs.

Thank you for e-mailing us; please keep up the discussion.

Editorial Committee

HOW MANY SOCIALISTS DOES IT TAKE?

How many Socialists does it take to change a light bulb? Apparently, none. The light bulb contains the seeds of its own revolution.

Yes, Socialists can tell very bad jokes using mixed metaphors. But it is a joke with a purpose. How many Socialists does it take to make a revolution? A few thousand? A few million?

The Socialist answer that a majority is required to establish Socialism, although we do not specify a numerical sum. Before Socialism is possible we expect a majority of the working class, at least in the advanced capitalist countries of the world, to have become politically aware knowing that capitalism cannot be made to work in their interests.

Once this position has been reached the revolution would have really begun. We are not dependent on the last Labour Party member or tribe living in the depths of the Rain forest, if there are indeed any left before Socialism is established.

At the moment a few hundred Socialists get ignored perhaps ridiculed as eccentrics. This is the lot of minorities. However, ignorance and ridicule does not invalidate the Socialist case against capitalism.

A large number of Socialists will be an irritant to the capitalist class and their paid supporters. Socialists will be the subject of abusive articles in the newspapers by the likes of Gove, Littlejohn, Hitchens, Aaronovitch and other assorted intellectual prostitutes.

When Socialists become a sizeable minority, they will be met with books and political broadcasts claiming Socialism will not work and reforms will be desperately thrown at the working class in an attempt to buy them off.

A few billion Socialists world-wide and the game will be up. There will be nothing the capitalist class will be able to do to stop the revolution turning 360 degrees. The detractors who claimed that Socialism will be impossible will hear the clock strike thirteen. There will be no Sun editorials. There will be no Labour Party. The skin ruptures. The water breaks. Socialism is born.

Why we are here. Capitalism causes war.

On May 18 2001 we attended a commemoration at Burford, Oxfordshire of Levellers who were shot by Cromwell during the 17th century English Civil War. Below is a copy of the leaflet we distributed.

On May 14 1649 soldiers of Cromwell's army mutinied at Salisbury and issued a Declaration, inspired by the Levellers, explaining why they refused to go to fight a war in Ireland. When they reached Burford they were ambushed by soldiers loyal to Fairfax and Cromwell. Several hundred were captured and imprisoned in Burford Church. Next morning three were shot by firing squad in sight of their comrades lined-up on the church roof.

The Levellers were a group of radical republicans who wanted the franchise for "free-born Englishmen" (not necessarily including women, servants and labourers) and who were prominent in London and in the ranks of the army until their power was broken by Cromwell, after the mutinies of 1647 and 1649. Their influence waned steadily, especially after the suppression of John Lilburne and the Digger Colonies associated with Gerrard Winstanly.

The issues of Democracy and War which brought about Cromwell's suppression of the Levellers and the Diggers still have an important bearing in our own day, the urgent need for the working class to consciously and politically establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain has always insisted on the democratic nature of Socialism, and on the value that the widest possible discussion of conflicting political views has for the working class. We do not unite with non-socialist organisations which claim to be defending democracy, neither do we minimise the importance of democracy for the working class or the socialist movement; it is simply that we are convinced that democracy cannot be defended in such a manner.

Since democracy is always vulnerable under capitalism, we argue that democracy for the working class can only be consolidated and expanded to the extent that workers adopt the Socialist standpoint. To renounce Socialism so that democracy can be defended, means ultimately the renunciation of both Socialism and democracy.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain also has a history of opposing wars on grounds of class. We opposed the First and Second World Wars and all subsequent conflicts on the grounds that the international working class, who have to live on a wage or salary, have no interest in killing each other. Workers neither own nor control the means of production - factories, communication and transport systems, and the points of distribution. Workers do not own the raw resources of the world. They have no strategic interests to protect. And they have no trade routes to defend. In short they have no country.

This logical position is based on Socialist principle. We do not support nationalist "liberation" wars. Unlike the capitalist left, we do not support the enemies of the US and the UK. Nor do we support the futile gesture of CND who ignorantly believe that you can have capitalism without wars. There is only one enemy; the capitalist class. There is only one war; the class war. And there is only one objective; the abolition of the wages system. We extend our friendship to workers of all countries. We struggle to replace world capitalism with world Socialism. We want to see an end to classes, class power and class privilege. However, only a working class majority, consciously and politically taking socialist action can establish Socialism. Below is part of our **Declaration** on war. It was published in August 1914.

"The Socialist Party of Great Britain pledges itself to keep the issue clear by expounding the CLASS STRUGGLE, and whilst placing on record its abhorrence of this latest manifestation of the callous, sordid and mercenary nature of the capitalist class, and declaring that no interests are at stake justifying the shedding of a single drop of working class

blood, enters into emphatic protest against the brutal and bloody butchery of our brothers of this and other lands who are being used as food for cannon abroad while suffering and starvation are the lot of their fellows at home.

Having no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to our fellow workers of all lands the expression of our goodwill and socialist fraternity, and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism.

"THE WORLD FOR THE WORKERS!"

The EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

August 25th 1914

"Wage workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to win! MARX"

SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

The Socialist Party of Great Britain's contribution to Socialist theory lies in having worked out a satisfactory solution to the problem of reform and revolution based on the revolutionary use of democratic institutions, including Parliament, to achieve Socialism. Parliament had only been used by the Social Democrats to get reforms and it was assumed that this was the only purpose for which it could be used. Our contribution was to point out that this was a false conclusion and that there was no reason why Parliament could not be used by a class-conscious Socialist majority to win power for the Socialist revolution. **Questions of the Day: Gradualism and Revolution**, p 36, 1969.

How to spot the working class

The eighth Earl of Cadogan, the eighth richest man in Britain, is about to use up some of his £1.3 billion fortune in the High Court trying to establish a legal definition of the term "*working class*" (*Times*, 12 April 2002).

Apparently, Earl Cadogan is trying to stop the £2 million development of a public house off the Kings Road in Chelsea into luxury homes because his father wanted to use the land for working class housing.

He claims that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is deliberately denying the term working class still exists in order to support the building of luxury houses on his family's former land. The earl's grandfather gave the land to the council in 1929 under a covenant that any new homes built on it should be for the working classes.

The property company, Dano, argues that the £1.5 million price tag on the homes is not beyond the means of "*working people*".

Working Class is an unfashionable word. New Labour never uses the word. There is supposed to be a meritocracy; of winners and losers, producers and consumers. In the media all you every read about is the "*Middle-Class*" and the "*Under Class*". However, the term "*working class*" represents a majority of society. To understand what the phrase actually means gives you an understanding about society, who produces the social wealth and why a conflict and struggle exists between workers and capitalists.

To be a member of the working class is not about what school you went to, the university you were educated at, the way you speak and what you spend your money on. Nor is to be working class about where you eat, what you eat and who you eat with. Popular definitions of the working class as someone living on a council estate, unemployed or in a manual job with no books on the shelf,

disinterested in education and spending their lives obsessed with sport and celebrities is wrong.

The Institute of National Statistics states that you are working class if you neither own the fruits of your labour nor control the terms and conditions of your working life. This is still a confusing definition but is getting nearer a scientific definition of working class.

Class is in fact a social relationship. It signifies private property ownership, the ability to employ somebody and the power to take away what someone has produced.

Class is a social relation between classes and to the means of production, raw resources, factories, transport and communication and distribution points. If you own the means of production and live exclusively off the unearned income of rent, interest and profit then you are a capitalist. If you do not own the means of production but are forced into the labour market to sell your ability to work for a wage or a salary then you are working class. Not everyone fits into this definition but enough do to differentiate these two diametrically opposed groups in society and the pursuit each has of its own economic and political interests.

There is another attribute of the working class which is important to bear in mind. The working class produce all the social wealth in society. They produce wealth to keep themselves and their families as an exploited class and they produce a surplus which is taken away from them as commodities to be sold for a profit. Surplus value, as Marx called it, is the source of the capitalist's profit, privilege and luxury.

The Marxist concept and definition of class is scientific precisely because it includes how people perceive their position (class consciousness) and how they act on that perception (class organisation). Classes are both made by, and

are makers of, history. As Marx demonstrated, the class struggle is the motor force of history and the working class is the last exploited class in human history to secure its freedom.

Engels defined the working class as "*the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live*" (**The Communist Manifesto**, p108). In Marx's and Engel's writing, proletariat was used as a synonym for the working class. "... *the proletariat ie the man, who being without capital and rent, lives purely by labour, and by a one sided abstract labour ...*" (Marx, **Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844**, p32). For Marx, the historic role of the working class was to act in its own interests and replace capitalism with Socialism. He urged the working class to abolish the wages system.

As to the flats in Chelsea, if someone who buys one of the apartments does not need to work and enjoys an income derived from rent, interest and profit, then they are a member of the capitalist class. If, however, the buyer of the apartment has to work for a wage or salary then he/she is a member of the working class.

Nevertheless the price being asked for these luxury Chelsea flats is beyond the reach of most workers. We imagine that very few workers will ever set foot inside these apartments except as estate agents, cleaners, porters, postmen, maids, nannies, maintenance staff, child-minders, and chauffeurs.

The real question that should be asked by workers is how Lord Cadogan got his wealth in the first place. Where did the capital for the developers come from? And why is it that only a small section of society can afford the best housing. In answering these questions will begin to take workers away from accepting their class position as wageslaves to politically and consciously abolishing class, class relations and class privilege.

THE UNITED STATES, IRAQ AND OIL

Oil is the main reason the United States wants to be rid of Saddam Hussein. Oil has always been at the heart of Middle East politics. Even more so now that prices are on the increase and Saddam Hussein is using the threat of oil reduction as a weapon against Western Capitalism over the Palestinian question. As the journalist, Adrian Hamilton observed "*the US search for secure oil supplies is as much behind Washington's determination to overthrow Saddam Hussein now as any question of Saddams*" (**Independent**), 12 April 2002).

Oil has always been a major consideration in United States politics as it has with other capitalist countries from the early 20th century onwards (oil was discovered, in what was Persia, in 1900). A country as dependent on imports as the US is bound to take a strategic view of its interests, all the more since President Bush knows and understands oil and its importance to the US economy. It would not be capitalism if the US didn't plan to tie up oil reserves for itself. It always has in the past, which is why it supported Saddam Hussein against Iran even though he was using chemical weapons against the Kurds.

Increasingly, the United States cannot depend on countries like Saudi for its oil. As an oil producer useful for US interests, Saudi Arabia has reached its peak. It is in a financial mess. And Saudi politics is changing towards an anti-Western position. This was made clear by the fact that many of those who took part in the September 11 attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon came from Saudi Arabia, as did Bin Laden himself. As a consequence, the US is increasingly looking elsewhere for its oil imports.

There are only two unexploited sources of oil which match those in Saudi Arabia. One is Iraq and the other is the Caspian. The United States wants to secure both oil areas for its strategic interests. Iraq has the stumbling block of Saddam Hussein. As for the Caspian, the problem the US has there is with

Page 2

Russia and its own interests. Should the oil be pipelined via Russia and countries under its influence or through Iran and the Middle East? This is the dilemma for Washington strategists.

These are the real considerations of governments. If it means that the easier choice is to remove Saddam Hussein and replace the regime, as in Afghanistan, with one which will do the United State's bidding, then so be it. Capitalism is like that. It has nothing to do with morality, idealism, democracy and international law. It is all about naked self interest. It is the imposition of the powerful over the weak. And it is about securing raw resources, points of strategic importance and defending spheres of influence.

The Socialist point is that none of these capitalist considerations are in the interest of the working class. Something to bear in mind when Blair next gives one of his tedious moral sermons about "*good versus evil*".

Capitalism Causes Poverty 1

Tony Blair boasted that he was going to end child poverty by 2025. He is off to a bad start. A year after his boast the UN children's agency, Unicef, reported in June 2000 that one in five British children are growing up in poverty, a worse record than Turkey, Poland and Hungary. The figure has trebled in the last 20 years but poverty increase was occurring during the last Callaghan Labour government at the end of the 1970's.

In May of this year the government's own Office of National Statistics showed three million British children living below the poverty line. Poverty is not a party political question between *good Labour* and *evil Tories*. In 1996 1% of the population owned 20% of the wealth, about £388 billion, a figure that has not changed much since Labour took power under the slogan "*New Labour: The Party of Business*". That is one promise Labour has kept and delivered.

The truth of the matter is that both parties can do nothing about poverty. Poverty exists because of the institution of private property ownership. Only the abolition of capitalism can end poverty - something neither Labour nor the Tories exist to do!

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

During the 1890's, Swann Sonnenschein published the *Social Science Series*, which included **Socialism: Utopian and Scientific** by Engels and **Capital and Counter Revolution** by Marx. Early Party members often used to buy these books to help them in the political class struggle.

Recently a copy of Engels' **The Condition of the Working Class in England (1844)**, published by Swann Sonnenschein, came to light in the library effects of a late member of the SPGB. Inside the book was an original pamphlet by the Socialist League entitled "*To Whom Shall We Vote*" which had been published for the November 1885 General Election. The pamphlet marked a page in which Engels had written:

"So long as the wealthy classes not only do not feel the want of any emancipation, but strenuously oppose the self emancipation of the working class, so long as the social revolution will have to be prepared and fought out by the working class alone" (Preface 1892, page x)

The book was probably originally owned by a founder member of the SPGB and has written on the inside jacket "*April 1904*", a month before the meeting of the Protest Committee's supporters at Battersea and two months before the Inaugural Meeting on Sunday afternoon, 12 June at the Printers' Hall, Bartlett's Passage, off Fetter Lane, Fleet Street. No plaque has been raised to commemorate this historical moment in working class history.

The pamphlet is of interest because it was one of the first documents published by the Socialist League after William Morris, Eleanor Marx, Ernest Belfort Bax and Edward Aveling had left the Socialist Democratic Federation in December 1884. They had left because of Hyndman's control over the party's journal, **Justice**, his tendency to expel members with whom he disagreed, his dictatorial methods and his nationalism. What they did not leave the SDF for, and this is an important point, was Hyndman's "*Socialism*".

The Socialist Democratic Federation is often portrayed as being Marxist and holding Socialist ideas. This is an ill-deserved description despite the efforts of Socialists working within and increasingly against the SDF's leadership. In his book **"From Serfdom to Socialism"** (1907), J H Hardie happily included the SDF along with the Independent Labour Party and the Fabians as examples of those organisations who gave working definitions of Socialism. Conveniently, Hardie did not include the SPGB's definition of Socialism.

The contradictions, tensions and future problems of the SDF were evident right from its inception. Its leading members could never shake off their radical liberal upbringing. This can be seen in the SDF's Manifesto published in 1884 **"A Summary of the Principles of Socialism"**, written by Hyndman and Morris. There is no evidence of a Socialist programme within the text. Instead, its authors proposed nationalisation or state capitalism. The following quotations from the Manifesto make this clear.

There was to be money and credit:

"... handling of money and credit must necessarily be carried on in future for the advantage of the community at large" (pp 58-59).

Readers were then told of policies for:

"heavy cumulative taxation", "national banks", "a national credit establishment" and "state and communal centres of distribution for the purchase and exchange of goods" (pp 58-59).

If we compare the **"socialism"** advocated by the SDF in 1884 with the Socialism set out in the **Object and Declaration of Principles** of the Socialist Party of Great Britain in 1904, the political gulf between both positions is vast.

Here is the object of the SDF:

"The Socialisation of the Means of Production, Distribution and Exchange, to be controlled by a Democratic State in the interests of the entire community, and the complete emancipation of Labour from the Domination of Capitalism and Landlordism, with the establishment of Social and Economic equality between the Sexes".

And here is the SPGB's Object:

"The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community".

No wonder Hyndman chided the "impossibilists" for wanting "the clock to strike thirteen". Hyndman just could not believe you could have a wageless, moneyless society without leaders in which production would simply take place for need.

The object of the SDF was not the clear and robust Socialist statement proposed by the SPGB. The difference being that the SDF was founded and largely financed by a bourgeois dilettante while the SPGB was founded and democratically controlled by men and women of the working class coming into confrontation with employers in the day-to-day class struggle. A working class politics was not learnt in a gentleman's club but in the factory, office and shop.

A Socialist Party had to be principled and it had to foreshadow the society it wished to see established. At its inception the SPGB rejected the cult of leadership, spurned nationalism for International Socialism, ensured that the Party as a whole controlled its journal and literature and ensured a fair hearing for those who contravened the Party rules. Socialist theory is not an academic parlour game. Theory dynamically interacts with practical affairs. Theory derives from and informs the class struggle around the retention or abolition of

the wages system. Theory is not imposed externally. The founder members of the SPGB engaged in the political class struggle with a firm understanding of capitalism, and the necessary political process to abolish private property ownership and production for profit.

We now return to the 1885 Election Address of the Socialist League. We find in the text of the pamphlet little advance in Socialist ideas.

The first point to note is that the Socialist League urged the working class not to vote and not to elect Socialist delegates to Parliament on the grounds that they would either be *"lost in the crowd of rich men"* or be *"got at by one party or another"* (p 1).

So, in advising the working class to *"keep away from the poll altogether"* (p 5) what did the Socialist League ask workers to do?

First, education: *"read Socialist books, papers and pamphlets; attend Socialist meetings; discuss the matter with Socialists and ask questions; tell their speakers your doubts and fears. Do not be ashamed to learn, do not be afraid to speak"* (p 7).

Second, build up a Socialist movement: *"Let the good news spread! By ones and twos, by tens, by hundreds, by thousands join the Socialists, the great Brotherhood of Labour, that you may even now begin to take counsel how you shall get your own; how the world shall get its own; for once again, if you will but claim it, you will be the world"* (p 7).

And, third, direct action, because *"those who govern ... (will) either use violence against you, which you will learn how to repel or quail before you and sit helpless, not knowing what to do, until the time shall come when you, not knowing what to do, will step in and claim your place, and become the re-born Society of the world"* (p 7)

The election address was written above the name of The Council of the Socialist League, which included William Morris, and printed at the "*Commonweal*" Office, now the Marx Museum.

For those who do not have an uncritical love affair with William Morris (he has been claimed by the Greens, Anarchists, the Communist Party, the Clapham-based Socialist Party and the Labour Party with equal romantic fervour), these passages show an equal gulf between the Socialist League and the SPGB as it does between the SDF and the SPGB. The Socialist Party of Great Britain has always insisted on the necessity for the workers to gain control of "*the machinery of government*" before trying to set up Socialism.

Socialism will not be possible until a majority of the workers understand the implications for common ownership and democratic control and are prepared to use their vote to ensure the abolition of the wages system. When the workers understand Socialism they will know what to expect when it is established and what will be involved in putting production for social use into operation.

In Britain, Parliament has a complete and secure grip upon the armed forces, and government interventions in strikes and disturbances have shown on whose side they act. These are a forceful illustration of how necessary it is for the workers to obtain control of Parliament before attempting to uproot the existing foundations of society. They further show that the only way to obtain control is by sending socialist delegates to Parliament, not as some would say to legitimate Socialism, but as a practical necessity, to prevent the State's armed forces from being used to crush the Socialist movement. Logically and politically this means for Socialists to discount, as politically dangerous, all forms of direct action, whether it be by peaceful or violent means.

Yes, the SDP and the Socialist League did hold some ideas with which the Party would not have disagreed. That is not the point. Both organisations were muddled and unclear over many important issues. The revolutionary significance of the SPGB lies in the Party's coherent analysis of capitalism, its democratic political programme requiring conscious political action by a working class majority sending Socialist delegates to Parliament to the capture of the machinery of government, and its singular Socialist object. It is an echo from the past which has a loud resonance for today's class struggle.

Now that the last century's love affair with Leninism is dead and buried, the time is ripe for a rediscovery of "*classical Marxism*" at the heart of the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles for the working class to organise politically, not for state capitalism or other reforms of the class system, but for Socialism and the world-wide overthrow of capitalism.

Capitalism Causes Poverty 2

The latest figures from the World Health Organisation (June 2000) show that 1.2 billion people, a fifth of the world's population, are living in poverty. 70% of the poor are female and there are twice as many women as men among the world's 900 million illiterates. In sub-Saharan Africa, where a combination of Aids and poverty is ravaging the population, life expectancy is dropping back to levels akin to the Black Death, which afflicted Feudal society in the 14th century. A baby born in Sierra Leone in 1999 can expect to live 25.9 years in good health. And defenders of capitalism say that we live in the best of all possible worlds. If capitalism is the answer then it was a bloody stupid question.

The United Nations have also provided the following statistics about the state of capitalism at the beginning of the 21st century.

- o Number of people currently expected to die from starvation: 900 million;
- o Number of children in the world dying each year from controllable illness: 12 million;
- o Number of people in the world that die each year of preventable social causes: 10 million;
- o Number of children in world blinded yearly from lack of Vitamin A: 500 million;
- o Number of women who die in childbirth in world: 650,000;
- o UN estimate of yearly expenditure on war: \$800 billion;
- o Number of children in world that die by age 5 (yearly): 12 million.

Surely Socialism must be seen as the answer to these pressing social problems?

EXPLOITATION AND TAXATION

Marx made a distinction between appearance and reality.

He said that the way people ordinarily looked at capitalism was often superficial. They did not go beyond the surface appearance of things.

Take the example of employment. Workers do not own private property in the form of raw resources, factories and distribution points. They are forced onto the labour market to find employment. Workers need wages and salaries to buy commodities in order to live. To get employment they have to find capitalists willing to hire them on a regular basis. Over time successive generations of workers have erroneously accepted an almost natural need for employers in the same way as they require air to breathe.

The unfortunate political spin-off is that workers have the tendency to merge their own distinct class interests with those of the capitalist class. Despite the class struggle and strikes over more pay and better working conditions, trade unions often end up supporting one section of industry in which their members work against those of another sector. Workers want their own jobs secured as opposed to workers in other countries. In times of war, workers support the interest of the capitalist class in the country where they reside, and kill or support the killing of workers in another part of the world. As a consequence, the working class is split between industries, over geographical regions and between nation states.

Another example is the question of exploitation. Trade Unions and workers believe that exploitation only occurs where a bullying management forces workers to work for low pay and poor conditions of employment. Workers, who take this simplistic view of exploitation go on to demand "*fair day's wage for a fair day's work*". Such a view of the world makes them prey to an array of social reformers, the syndicalists, those who support general strikes and

various forms of direct action, groups like the misnamed Socialist Alliance and, of course, the main capitalist parties: Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats.

To show workers capitalism as it really is, Marx developed three interrelated propositions - a materialist conception of history, a labour theory of value and a political concept of the class struggle. These were set out scientifically in his three volume work, **Capital**, which he wrote for readers who wanted to learn something new and who wanted to think for themselves.

In analysing the commodity (including the worker's ability to work), its use-value and exchange-value, Marx showed that workers create all the social wealth in society. He went on to demonstrate that workers produce more wealth than their wages and salaries. It follows from this that all workers are exploited - whether low paid or high paid. Indeed, Marx also showed that rate of exploitation was likely to be greater where workers were better paid. Marx held that the capitalist class exploit the working class as a whole.

This surplus (Marx called it surplus value) formed the unearned incomes of rent, interest and profit. And from these three sources of unearned income comes the taxation necessary to support the state, whose main function is to protect the institution of private property ownership and pursue the interests of the indigenous capitalist class.

That is why, in the **Communist Manifesto**, Marx and Engels said that the state was nothing more than the "*executive of the bourgeoisie*". If workers paid taxation they would then have a stake in capitalism. But since a wage reflects those commodities which the working class need to produce themselves and their families as an exploited class, they cannot pay tax. The accounting mechanism which the state uses to draw in taxation from the unearned incomes of rent, interest and profit does not invalidate the logic of Marx's theory of value.

This fact was known to economists before and after Marx.

Adam Smith, in **Wealth of Nations** (Book V, Chapter II, and Article III), showed that taxes on wages have to be paid by the employers in the form of a corresponding increase of the wages he has to pay.

David Ricardo, in his **Principles of Political Economy and Taxation** (Chapter XVI Taxes on Wages), held the same view: "*A tax on wages is wholly a tax on profits*".

Professor Cannan, a student of Adam Smith, also held the same view and applied it to the local rates or what is now called the Community Tax.

What Smith, Ricardo and Cannan recognised is that wages are determined by conditions in the labour market while the prices at which manufacturers can sell their goods are independently determined by conditions in their markets.

Classical economists and Marx were not the only people to hold the view that taxation ultimately comes out of profits. An article in the **Times** (2 May 1986) quoted Adam Smith's argument and accepted it. The writer of the article complained, however, that the profits of a small firm, of which he was an owner, are more heavily reduced by taxation than those of a large firm because he argued the wages bill of the small firm represents a larger proportion of the firm's total expenses. He urged that some adjustment in tax arrangements should be made to help small firms.

Regarding labour being the source of social wealth, Marx pointed out that capitalism has not only extended the forces of production to the point where production for use is possible but it has also created social and co-operative labour which currently runs production and distribution albeit in the interests of another class. The capitalist class is now superfluous.

The working class, therefore, do not need employers. They could, if they so wished, organise production, distribution and the affairs of society for themselves. However, to do so they would have to recognise that capitalism could never be made to work in their interests. And such recognition would have to be class conscious, political and focused towards capturing political power. This is the principal value of studying Marx.

FROM OUR COMRADE IN FRANCE

The plague or cholera? After a dreary campaign which led to a 28,39% abstention record in the first round of the French presidential election (compared with 21,62% in 1995 and 18,62% in 1988), French voters had to choose in the run-off between the conservative incumbent, President Jacques Chirac, who got only 19,88% of the votes - the lowest figure ever for an outgoing president, and the far-right, xenophobic candidate, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who got 16,86% compared with 15,1% in the 1995 presidential election.

Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, favourite of the election with President Chirac, suffered a historical defeat. For the first time since 1969 a left-wing candidate did not go through to the second round. Apart from the dispersal of the votes of the Left (with five candidates for the former "*Plural Left*" government out of 16, the highest figure ever), the failure of Jospin's government (from the point of view of the workers, not of the bosses) and the similarity of the programmes of the "*socialist*" candidate and the conservative one, were the major causes of the dramatic decrease in the "*socialist*" vote.

"Political seism", "*earthquake*", "*fascist threat*" ... the hysterical reactions of media commentators and government coalition losers before Le Pen's "*victory*" over his "*socialist*" opponent shook off the general apathy and indifference. Numerous demonstrations against Le Pen were organised in most of the big cities in France between the two rounds of the Presidential election. May Day demonstrations were dominated by the "*need*" to "*save the Republic*" and "*block Le Pen's way*". Very few realised that to do this, voters had to elect one of those whose failed politics paved the way to the National Front candidate.

In the run-off, Chirac won with an overwhelming 82,21% majority. This "*soviet*", "*Albanian*", "*Bokassa*" type score was hardly surprising given that the whole French political spectrum, from the right to the extreme left, called to

vote for him, with the exception of Arlette Laguiller, from *Workers Struggle*, who consistently called for abstention (74% of her supporters didn't follow her voting orders), and the extreme right dissident Bruno Megret who called for a vote for Le Pen. As a result, this score gives the Head of State all the legitimacy required to continue the attacks on workers conditions. The number of the abstentionists, if it decreased, remained quite high, with 20,29% of the electorate.

President Chirac's victory may have stopped Le Pen for a while, but it will not end the problems which lead hundreds of thousands of workers to erroneously think that a vote for Le Pen would solve their problems. Le Pen's threat to the Republic and democracy is, at least for the moment, overestimated. In relative terms, the electoral scores of the far-right candidates are more or less stable since 1995, as these got 19,45% of the votes in the first round of the 2002 presidential election, compared with 19,76% in the first round in 1995 and 17,79% for Le Pen in the second round in 2002 (corresponding to 5.5 millions voters). But in absolute terms, the electoral influence of the extreme right wing increases slowly but steadily: 4,570,838 Le Pen's electors in the first round of the 1995 presidential election, 4,805,307 in the first round of the 2002 one. Indeed, in the run-off of the 2002 presidential election, Le Pen gained 720,000 new electors.

Actually, Le Pen is not a threat to the French Republic. Khomeyni's Iran was a republic, and so was Stalin's Russia and Pinochet's Chile. The capitalist republic can survive under an authoritarian government. Le Pen is a threat to the French working class, but so have been Chirac's and Jospin's governments. Workers have been sacked and repressed under both governments. Not only are the shameful beatings of nurses, a few years ago, or teachers, a few weeks before the election, by the police, good examples of whose interests the "left-wing" government defends, but so is the very fact that, even under a "left-wing" government, workers are compelled to organise in trade unions.

to go on strike and to demonstrate in order to defend their interests. In "democratic" countries, workers may have the right to vote, but unless it is used to vote for real Socialism and the abolition of the wages system, as workers, they remain at the mercy of their employers, they are wage-slaves.

Whichever party gained the most seats in the June 2002 general election, nothing fundamental will change. As usual, the working class will be the big loser in as much as they will be condemned to spend more time chained to capital. The left, right and extreme right wing parties may not place emphasis on the same issues (which is questionable given the similarity of Jospin's and Chirac's capitalist programmes and the emphasis that all of them have laid on crime) but, as parties of capital, they have one thing in common: their will to perpetuate the capitalist system and to preserve the interests of the minority capitalist class. The re-election of Chirac and the victory of the "democratic" parties will not end the subservience of the workers - neither the precariousness of their situation, only a vote for Socialism will. What the French workers must understand is that the choice is not between democracy and fascism. To end their problems, their only choice is between capitalism and Socialism.

CAPITALISM

Capitalism can never be made to work in the interests of the workers. It is based on their poverty and exploitation and can only work in the interests of the privileged owning class. A recognition of this is one of the basic principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. It can be summed up in the sentence "*capitalism cannot be reformed to run in the interests of the workers*". Grasp this and you can quickly see the futility of tinkering with capitalism and trying to tackle each problem on its own.

Obituary for George Russell

A unique contributor to the Socialist cause has come to an end as we regretfully announce the death of another of our members.

George Russell died on the 10th May 2002 in his 95th year. He spent some years of his early life in Canada but Manchester was his home town where he joined the Party in 1937, after, as he put it in a letter . . . "Harry Adler was the first socialist I met".

Manchester Branch were very active in the 1940's with outdoor and indoor meetings, and George's old house was often the venue for members and sympathisers to discuss various issues, when he would make his views known on many subjects as well as Socialism.

During the war he registered as a Conscientious Objector spending some months as a guest of H.M. Prisons Dept. including a spell in the infamous Strangeways. He stuck to his views all the way through and was released unconditionally.

In the 1940's he was appointed International Secretary, keeping up a lively correspondence with all the Companion Parties and other people who contacted us, thereby making friends all over the world.

All this correspondence is still intact, stored in boxes in his house, all carefully labelled and filed. A veritable gold mine for a researcher into Socialist history.

When the two branches were expelled in 1991, he soon realised that it was not a clash of personalities but a question of fundamentals, and he joined the re-constituted SPGB in November of that year. Since then he has kept up his correspondence with his world wide contacts. In 1983 he started to write his book - "The memoirs of an SPGB'er" and in 2001 the finished manuscript was sent to publisher in Paris, only to be lost in the post. Fortunately another copy is available, and we may yet see it in print; from our knowledge of George it would make interesting reading.

He was a master craftsman in making jewellery from silver and gold, which he sold knocking on the doors of houses in Manchester and elsewhere. He was a gentle and kind man, always willing to help someone in trouble, and many of these crossed his path. But it was to the Party and Socialism that he devoted so much of his life. Our General Secretary was pleased to have been asked by his son and daughter to say a few words in tribute to a character, the likes of which we shall not see again. Just a simple ceremony in a small graveyard in a farmers field. Amidst the buttercups and daisies, with a gentle breeze, it was like an open air meeting, where the final words were said.

To Billy his son and Helen his daughter, we offer our sincere condolences for their loss, and ours.

Page 2

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO...

The Socialist Party of Great Britain,

71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London, N.W.4